



ORGANISATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN STATES

Environment and Sustainable Development Unit

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NEWS RELEASE

Opening Remarks

By

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Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA)

March 4, 2008

Launch of Benchmarking Tool and Opening of Training of Trainers Workshop

Senator the Honourable Tessa Mangal, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia; Dr. Len Ishmael, Director General, OECS Secretariat; Mr Michael Taylor, Programme Management Specialist USAID Barbados Office Representative, partners in disaster risk management.

It is a pleasure for me to deliver remarks at today's opening ceremony on behalf of the CDERA Coordinator. It is always a pleasure to be in Saint Lucia and today it is particularly pleasing since CDERA is joining with the Government of Saint Lucia, OECS Secretariat and USAID in the opening of this Training of Trainers workshop and the official launch of the OECS/USAID Benchmarking tool.

Reminders of the diversity of hazards affecting us in the region are ever present. The ongoing volcanic emergency in Montserrat and the earthquake measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale in November 2007 are tangible reminders that our focus needs to be broader than hydro-meteorological hazards. Hazard impacts within our region repeatedly reveal the evidence that our development decisions continue to contribute to our vulnerability. The experiences of 2004 in particular attest to this and made more clear to us the need to revisit our regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategic Framework developed in 2001.

Our region has made great strides in developing a common disaster loss reduction vision - the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy (CDM). This strategy has emerged from a fully participatory approach in 2001 with the support of USAID/OFDA and UNDP. It is country centered and supported by development partners, private sector and broader civil society. One critical characteristic of the enhanced CDM Strategy has been the focus on a results based approach which emphasizes monitoring evaluation and reporting.



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At the CDERA CU we view the Benchmarking tool as one of a suite of instruments which will allow us to attain a better understanding of where we currently sit on the resilience continuum. From a more strategic perspective, the B-Tool has the potential to become a critical contributor in our ability to monitor and evaluate levels of targeted result achievement.

CDM stresses the importance of partnership development and sustainability as well exploitation of competitive niches towards the common goal of disaster loss reduction in our region. In this regard, two years ago, CDERA and the OECS Secretariat entered into a partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding to govern the collaboration between our two institutions in advancing principle 9 of the Saint Georges Declaration under the broader regional CDM umbrella.

As we deliberate towards the end of this week's workshop on the sub-regional plan to roll out of the Benchmarking tool, CDERA urges consideration of three areas:

First, Sustainability: The plan we devise out of necessity needs to be strategic in its approach, geared towards building mechanisms for integration into national level programming.

Second Participation: CDM stresses the importance of participatory approaches. Full benefit of the b-tool will only be realized if stakeholders are able to see the mutual benefits to be derived from its application to the sector level.

Third, Replicability: The OECS States comprise 9 of the 16 CDERA Participating States. We view the CDERA CU as a vehicle by which B-Tool application may be expanded to the wider CDERA and Caribbean families. As such, consideration must be given to the utilization of models to the extent possible during its roll out at the sub-regional level. Emphasis on the capture and documentation of lessons learnt is essential.

In closing, let me express thanks on behalf of CDERA to the Government of Saint Lucia, for hosting us at this event, and to USAID and the OECS Secretariat for their commitment to partnership under the CDM umbrella. I wish to pledge the support of the CDERA CU advancing the utilization of the tool and I anticipate a successful outcome from this session. Thank you.